

Kwanzaa Celebration Designed by Synthia Saint James



October 22, 1997
Los Angeles, CA
Scott #3175



October 29, 1999
Los Angeles, CA
Scott #3368



October 21, 2001
New York, NY
Scott #3548



October 10, 2002
Washington D.C.
Scott #3750

The Kwanzaa Stamp was first issued in 1997 and then reissued again in 1999, 2001, and 2002 due to a change in postal rates from 32c to 33c in 1999, 34c in 2001, and 37c in 2002.

Kwanzaa was first initiated in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Ron Karenga, a black-studies professor at California State University. Kwanzaa means *First Fruit* in Swahili. Kwanzaa is a non-religious ceremony incorporating the themes of several different African harvest festivals and honors family, community and culture. It is celebrated annually by millions of people throughout the world from December 26 through January 1 and represents unity and prosperity.

Kwanzaa embraces seven principles called *Nguzo Saba* in Swahili. The seven principles are: *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichaguliaa* (Self-Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), *Nia* (Purpose), *Kuumba* (Creativity), and *Imani* (Faith). They are represented by seven candles (*Mishumaa Saba*); three green candles, three red candles, and 1 black candle, which are placed in a candle holder called *Kinara*. The candle holder is placed on a straw mat (*Mkeka*). The three green candles, (on the right) represent *Ujamaa*, *Nia* and *Imani*. The three red candles (on the left) represent *Kujichaguliaa*, *Ujamaa* and *Kuumba*. The black candle in the center represents *Umoja*.

The Black candle is lit on the first Day of Kwanzaa and one additional candle is lit, (from left to right) on each following day of the holiday. On the evening of December 31, family members exchange gifts and celebrate with a feast called *Karamu*. January 1 is the final day of the Kwanzaa celebration.